

Dispatching Service Centralized in Preparation for 911

After several years of planning, 911, the universal emergency number, is a few weeks away in the towns of Duxbury, Kingston and Marshfield.

Although all fire, police and medical emergency calls are now being handled by public safety dispatchers at the police station here in Duxbury, the 911 emergency

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number will not be officially in service until later this month.

The centralized dispatch area at police headquarters is where local callers dialing 911 will have their address automatically displayed on a computer screen. The system will also provide the quickest directions to homes that are not best reached by their street addresses.

The new service is expected to mean the difference between life and death when seconds count, according to public safety officials, who are preparing for the introduction of 911, scheduled for between April 24 and May 1. "When the time comes, we'll have a public education drive," Lt. Donald Sjostedt said.

The 911 service will provide for the identification of vacant lots between existing homes and for back lots that have street access. An additional feature will allow people to provide medical information to the telephone company so that when 911 is dialed from a residence emergency responders will be aware of some medical situations in advance because it will be flashed on the computer screen along with the address the call is coming from.

Duxbury's 6 emergency dispatchers have been trained to adapt to the new 911 system, which is now housed at the Duxbury police headquarters instead of the central fire station where dispatchers have always handled fire and rescue calls. Police will back up dispatchers to prevent any emergency call back up.

In some cases preparation for the service meant changes of address numbers. Nearly 20 homes needed street number changes and 2 streets had to be renamed because for many years the town had 2 streets called Standish Road and 2 called Pilgrim Road.

Before bringing the system on line town officials had to compare their street number records with NYNEX records and put the houses on a given street in numerical sequence. The new system also accounts for future development of vacant lots between existing homes, and for back lots that have street access.

Lt. Donald Sjostedt said that residents should continue to report fire and medical emergencies by calling 934-5691 until 911 goes into effect later this month. Police emergencies should be reported on 934-5656 until then. The alternate emergency numbers will remain in effect for 6 months after 911 goes on line.